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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT AND ITS PREPARATORY PROCESS

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolutions 1989/91, 1991/93 and 1992/37, decided on the convening, mandate and preparatory process of the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994.

2. Subsequently, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/176, in which it recognized the importance of ensuring an adequate intergovernmental preparatory process for the Conference, as well as the importance of the participation in the Conference and its preparatory process of all relevant non-governmental organizations from developed and developing countries.

3. The Assembly accordingly requested the Council, at its organizational session for 1993, to consider the possibility of adjusting the proposed timing and duration of the second and third sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, and to formulate and adopt modalities to ensure the participation in and contribution to the Conference and its preparatory process of relevant non-governmental organizations.

Timing and duration of Preparatory Committee sessions

4. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference was held from 4 to 8 March 1991 in New York. In resolution 1991/93, the Council decided, in principle, to hold the second session of the Preparatory Committee

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* E/1993/2 and Add.1.

in August 1993, immediately following the rescheduled twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission. It also decided, in principle, to hold the third session of the Preparatory Committee early in 1994. The period 16-19 August 1993 is currently allocated for the second session of the Preparatory Committee.

5. At both the substantive session of 1992 of the Council and the forty-seventh session of the Assembly concern was expressed by delegations about the adequacy of the preparatory process for the Conference. Chief among these concerns was the view that while the Preparatory Committee at its first session had set in place a broadened mandate for the Conference, it had not addressed fully a number of important aspects of the remaining preparatory process, including the expected outcome of the Conference and how to address the issues of population and development in an integrated manner, as required by the Conference's mandate. In addition, the issue of the participation and contribution of non-governmental organizations remained unresolved.

6. Following the first session of the Preparatory Committee the international community and many parts of the United Nations system were actively preparing for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The experience of that process has influenced the approach many are taking to the International Conference on Population and Development. The extent of this influence is reflected in General Assembly resolution 47/176, in which the Assembly, inter alia, recognized the importance of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development.

7. Since only two sessions of the Preparatory Committee are scheduled before the Conference takes place, both delegations and the Conference secretariat are giving particular attention to the decisions which must be taken during the second session if the necessary preparation of the draft conference outcome is to be completed for consideration and negotiation at the third and final session. The Conference secretariat estimates that more than the four days currently allocated will be required. It is proposed, therefore, that eight days be requested, a period equal to the conference-servicing allocation already provided to cover the second session of the Preparatory Committee in August and the twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission (four days), and that the second session be brought forward to mid-May, beginning on 17 May. Any decision to extend the duration of the second session to more than eight days would have some, although limited, implications for the programme budget.

8. It should be noted that any decision to bring the second session forward would also have implications for the twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission, scheduled to be held in August 1993. As the work being undertaken for that session cannot be completed by May, it has been suggested that the Commission defer the session until 1994 and hold it in conjunction with the third session of the Preparatory Committee.

9. At its third session, the Preparatory Committee is to review and finalize the proposed outcome of the Conference in the form of a declaration and recommendations. These will be drafted by the Secretariat on the basis of guidance provided at the second session.

10. The Secretariat estimates that, at a minimum, a two-week session will be required for negotiation of this document, particularly since it will not previously have been the subject of intergovernmental negotiation. It is suggested that the third session of the Preparatory Committee be held in April 1994, thereby providing maximum opportunity for the documentation to be finalized and distributed well in advance of the session. If a two-week period is proposed, the dates 11-22 April 1994 are recommended. The rescheduled twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission could be held before or after those dates.

11. Extending the duration of the third session and rescheduling the twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission will have implications for the programme budget.

12. Should the Council decide to extend the duration and to adjust timing of the second and third sessions of the Preparatory Committee and reschedule the twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission, as suggested in the preceded paragraphs above, the statement on the programme budget implications of that decision would be submitted to the Council in accordance with established procedure before the decision is taken.

13. As such changes would fall in the biennium 1994-1995, they would need to be assessed at the substantive session of 1993 of the Economic and Social Council when the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1994-1995 in the economic, social and related fields is considered, and referred to the Committee on Conferences.

Participation of non-governmental organizations

14. In resolution 47/176, the General Assembly recognized the importance of the participation of relevant non-governmental organizations in the Conference and its preparatory process, and requested the Economic and Social Council to formulate and adopt modalities to ensure their participation in and contribution to the Conference, in particular those from developing countries, taking into account the procedures followed in the process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the experience gained in this matter in previous United Nations population conferences.

15. Records show that 109 groups participated in the United Nations World Population Conference held at Bucharest in 1974 and that 139 participated in the International Conference on Population held at Mexico City in 1984. Slightly more than 1,400 non-governmental groups were accredited by the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and were therefore eligible to attend the Conference. Many thousands of individuals associated with non-governmental groups did so.

16. Both the experience of non-governmental organizations in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and its preparatory process and the broadening of the mandate of the International Conference on Population and Development appear to be important factors in the interest already being shown by non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process. Several hundred non-governmental groups have already requested information about the Conference and have expressed the wish to participate in all the preparations for the Conference.

17. Selected non-governmental organizations have been invited to attend each of the six expert group meetings and non-governmental organizations have attended the two regional conferences held to date. At present they are actively organizing a consultative structure for non-governmental activity: the NGO Planning Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development. There is every indication that the interest and involvement of non-governmental organizations in the 1994 Conference and all its preparations will be significantly higher than they were at either of the previous population conferences.

18. In recognition of the importance attached to the participation of non-governmental organizations in all aspects of the process for the International Conference on Population and Development by delegations at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly and in the light of the experience gained with regard to the procedures adopted for the process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, it is proposed that modalities similar to those adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development be used for the International Conference on Population and Development and all aspects of its preparatory process. In this regard, decisions 1/1 and 2/1 adopted by the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development could be used as the basis for the modalities for the participation of non-governmental organizations. If this approach is accepted, the Conference secretariat will inform interested non-governmental organizations about arrangements for accreditation and prepare information on recommended non-governmental applicants for consideration by the Preparatory Committee at its second session.

19. It should be noted, at the same time, that some aspects of the accreditation process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development could be improved upon. For example, the very large number of non-governmental organizations that sought accreditation strained the resources of the Secretariat, which bore the main responsibility for reviewing the credentials of the applicants. In addition, the pace at which intergovernmental review of the proposals emanating from the Secretariat was conducted afforded delegations little or no time to scrutinize the proposals. Although it is not expected that non-governmental organizations will seek accreditation in such numbers on this occasion, any accreditation process for non-governmental organizations will add to the workload of the Conference secretariat. Procedures should be developed to ensure that the secretariat is able to undertake the necessary careful review of applications and that its

recommendations are available to delegations well before the Preparatory Committee is required to take action on them.

20. As the Preparatory Committee for the Conference is an Economic and Social Council body, it is expected that Member States will wish to take account of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations governing the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. Article 71, for instance, provides that non-governmental organizations should have either an international or national character in order to be eligible for official status.